The RYERSON POETRY CHAP-BOOKS



Rhythm Poems

SISTER MAURA



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SISTER MAURA belongs to the Institute of the Sisters of Charity of Halifax. She has given courses at Notre Dame University, and for Boston College, Dalhousie University and Fordham University. Her books and booklets include poetry, drama, and literary research. Sister Maura is now teacher of English at Mount Saint Vincent College in Halifax; she also lectures on occasion and contributes essays and lyrics to various magazines.

The Ryerson Poetry Milli Chapbooks (

Rhythm Poems

By Sister Maura

HAIL MARY

"HAIL, Mary!"
Sings the joyous month of May
The world around.
The snowy fields of far away,
The autumn glory of the south,
And the bright promise of a northern spring
Exultant sing
Praise to Our Lady of the May.
One month is all her own,
The maiden Mother's,
In gratitude that she
Cradled the human race to be
In her dear arms,
When she clasped close
The warm, wee body of her Son.

She stood beneath the cross. She bore the pain of Calvary: Our souls' gain was her bitter loss For three dim days, Then splendour came to light her life forevermore. Through death's dark door She passed in one fleet instant, And she dwells in radiance inaccessible: But yet, but yet, she listens to earth voices, And she sees The sorrows of her children and their joys. She notes their needs. As once in memoried Cana. And her word is mighty still Over the heart of God. At times, her love will brook no veil between: Fair as the moon. Once more she touches earth with pearl-pure feet. And makes her bounty known To children and to childlike hearts. Wide as the world, her love! It cherishes each journeying soul Foot-loose upon life's ways; All are her children. And when the final dark comes down Grimly upon their path, Ah! then, Star of the morning may she shine Out of a glorious sky, And smile her welcome To their rapturous cry, "Hail, Mary!"

EIRE

[Dance poem]

DAYSPRING over Innisfail!
The dawn's bright portals part,
And into the world of time
Steps the maiden.
The sunlight crowns her shapely head,
And her grass-green garments flow
In the morning air;
Candour and innocence look from her eyes,
And her soul,
Like a flame in a golden lamp,
Kindles her body's grace.
Eire, the daughter of God!

Not uncompanioned is she,
For the past throngs about her
In glimmering beauty.
Spirits of heroes of old
Who have acted a part on her emerald stage,
Then passed from its precincts
Ere history fashioned a pen,
And live as a story that's told
On the lips of the people:
Lo! they are with her.
Deirdre is there,
Her beautiful brow
Encircled in sorrow.

Goll and his princess dree their weird
Forever on an iron strand;
Diarmid and Grania flee in the wind
From a doom that relentlessly follows.
The Hound of Ulaidh runs his course;
He lives and loves,
And bears away
The palm of generous valour.
And great Finn rules his realm harmoniously
In the auroral hour
When strength and skill and comeliness
Make glad the land.

But who is it comes On the orient sea. Gracious and radiant? It is Christ the Master Of Galilee, The Son and the Lamb of God is He, And He comes to His Own. Oh! where. On this swinging ball of earth, Where has another welcomed Him With the heart of love that Eire gives As she kneels at His nail-pierced feet? From His hands She takes the torch of truth. And feeds it with her life. All Europe hears her clear voice teach, Melodious, beautiful, And Dante heeds her well.

Like an angel's song in the sanctuary, The music of her harp Thrills on the air.¹

Then the splendour dims. Black grows the sky; The storm clouds lower. And flash. And crash. And mutter. And roll with a sullen roar. Where can she bide From the stinging rain, And the deadly sleet, And the perilous path beneath her feet? Where but beside The gray Mass Rock? Its Sacrifice Is Blood of the strong And the Bread of life For her. Dark Rosaleen and Roisin Dubh. Or Granuaile, they call her now; And the Wild Geese Wing their fearless flight Over other lands.

¹Fis Adamnain and Peregrinatio Sancti Brandani formed part of Dante's heritage; and early rhymed hymns are, directly or indirectly, a gift of the Gaels.

Ah, but the sun must shine again!
Slowly, so slowly,
His shafts drive back
The gloomy rack,
And brightness rules the world once more.
Once more she lifts her shining head,
Once more her voice rings mellowly,
And the western skies
And the Southern Cross
Know her steps of light.
Fair is the present hour,
There's no gainsaying;
But what lies hid
Beyond the further curtain?

Eire, the future is yours To shape as you will. Much have you given, And yet, who can tell If a greater gift be not to come? But let your soul lead you: And then. The angels who walk by your side In panoplied glory, The hosted saints of high heaven Whose prayers are your blessing, And Mary Whose word is commandment, They will be mighty to aid, To bend the event to your will, And crown your desire with fulfilment, O beautiful daughter of God!

WHITE MAGIC

ACLEAR, cold dawn
Has frozen the sudden downpour of the night
To witchery.
The soft skies beckon
And the bright air lures me forth
Into a world as white as purity.

Maple and birch That winter through Have starkly climbed the western hill. Now wear a pearly silver gown And flaunt in the sun Their gleaming plumes of glass, That in the shadow seem Dove-coloured ostrich feathers. The patriarchal pines are bearded, Pendulous and hoar. An ever-moving sea That gave the azure of the sky back Night-dark blue Or twinkled, dancing gold, in the sun, Now lies a wide snow meadow, Utterly still. Along the orchard paths, The spreading apple boughs Have diamond twigs And glitter here and there With rainbow radiance.

This is no world of workaday, Ah, no!
It is a magic land;
Its crystal wind can blow away All care and weariness,
And refresh the human soul.

AIRMEN'S PRAYER

GOD,
Father almighty,
Eternal King,
Direct Thou our way
And prosper our flight
Through the pathless immensity of the air.
Thou hast given Thine angels charge over us;
In their hands may they bear us up
Lest we hurtle to death from on high.
Lo!
Under the shadow of Thy wings
Will we trust
In life and in death.

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